

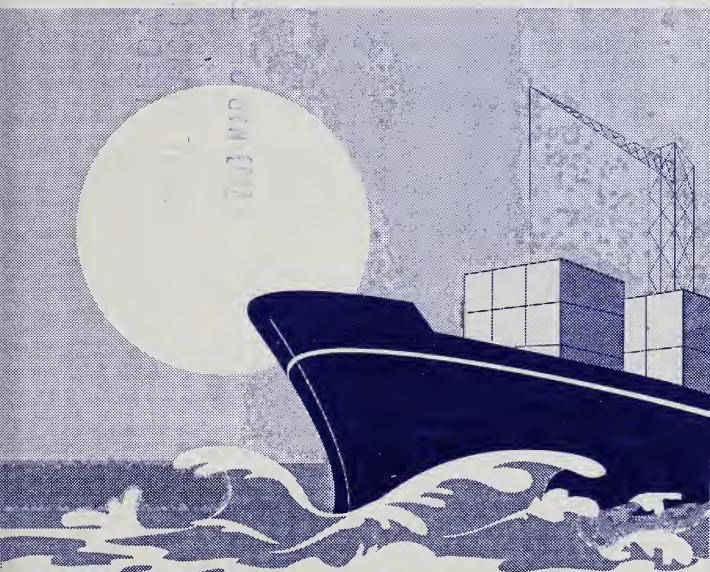
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Importing Meat and Poultry to the United States

A Guide for Importers
and Brokers

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**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

Food Safety
and Inspection
Service

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Meat and poultry imported into the United States must be produced under standards equivalent to those of the United States for safety, wholesomeness, and labeling accuracy. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is responsible for assuring that those standards are met.

FSIS has authority over all products from cattle, sheep, swine, goats, horses, mules and other equines, chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, and guineas. This includes processed products containing more than three percent raw meat or two percent or more cooked poultry meat.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has jurisdiction over imported fish, buffalo, rabbits, venison, wild game, and all other foods not covered by the Federal meat and poultry inspection laws. FDA offices are located in major U.S. cities and are listed in local telephone directories under "*U.S. Government.*" The FDA headquarters office can be contacted by calling (301) 443-6553 or by writing to:

Division of Import
Operations and Policy
Food and Drug Administration
15800 Crabbs Branch Way
Rockville, MD 20855

Eligibility To Export To The United States

Imported meat and poultry must originate in countries and plants approved to export to the United States.

How Countries Become Eligible to Export


Countries wishing to become eligible to export meat or poultry to the United States must make a formal request by letter to:

**International Programs
Food Safety and Inspection Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC 20250**

The evaluation of a country's inspection system to determine eligibility involves two steps: a document review and an on-site review.

The document review is an evaluation of the country's laws, regulations, and other written information. It focuses on five risk areas: contamination, disease, processing, residues, and compliance and economic fraud. Technical experts evaluate the information to assure that critical points in the five risk areas are addressed satisfactorily with respect to standards, activities, and resource allocations.

If the document review process shows the country's system to be satisfactory, a technical team will visit the country to evaluate the five risk areas as well as other aspects of the inspection system including plant facilities and equipment, laboratories, training programs, and in-plant inspection operations. If FSIS judges the system equivalent to the U.S. system, the country becomes eligible to export meat or poultry to the United States.



The ability to control drug and chemical residues is one of the major features of an inspection system that must be judged equal to the U.S. system. Countries must be re-certified annually as continuing to operate an equivalent residue control program.

FSIS periodically reviews inspection systems in eligible countries to assure they continue to meet U.S. requirements. Review frequency is based on the country's performance history.

How Plants Become Eligible to Export

The chief inspection official in an eligible country is responsible for certifying annually to FSIS the names of individual plants that meet all applicable standards and are authorized to export to the United States.

Eligible Countries

About 40 countries are approved to export to the United States, although only about 30 are active exporters. Traditionally, the largest exporting countries are Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, followed by Denmark, Argentina, Brazil, and Costa Rica. In recent years, the United States has imported from 2.4 to 2.8 billion pounds of meat and poultry annually, always less than 10 percent of the domestic meat supply. Most is fresh and processed meat; only a small amount of poultry is imported.

The list of eligible countries changes periodically. For information on eligible countries and certified plants, call (202) 501-7472 or write to:

**Program Development Division
FSIS International Programs
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC 20250**

Animal Health Restrictions

To protect U.S. livestock, USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) restricts some products from entering the United States because of animal disease conditions in the country of origin. For example, countries where rinderpest or foot-and-mouth disease exists are not permitted to export fresh, chilled, or frozen meat to the United States. However, meat from such countries could be shipped to the United States if it is commercially heat processed or cured according to APHIS requirements. Similar requirements are in place for products from countries where other diseases exist.

For information on restrictions related to animal diseases, call (301) 734-7885 or write to:

APHIS/Veterinary Services
National Center for Import/Export
U.S. Department of Agriculture
4700 River Road, Unit 40
Riverdale, MD 20737-1231

Approval of Product Labels

F SIS import inspectors check labels on both shipping containers and retail-size packages.

Labels on retail packages of meat or poultry shipped to the United States must meet U.S. labeling requirements. Effective July 1, 1996, the authority to approve some labels will transfer to the inspector in the plant where the product is labeled. All other labels will require advance approval from FSIS in sketch form.

Certified foreign plants should obtain label approvals before preparing products for export. Product labels must be in English and comply with U.S. ingredient and labeling requirements.

Labels must include:

- product name,
- establishment number and country of origin,
- name and address of the manufacturer or distributor,
- net quantity of contents in avoirdupois (pounds and ounces) or liquid measure,
- list of ingredients, and
- handling statements, if applicable.

Applications should be made on FSIS Form 7234-1 with a copy of the proposed label attached. Multiple copies of the form and the proposed label must be submitted. For current information on labeling requirements and application procedures, call (202) 254-2599 or write to:

**FSIS Food Labeling Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture
P.O. Box 7416
Ben Franklin Station
Washington, DC 20250-7416**

Shipping container labels do not need advance approval, but they are checked by FSIS during reinspection at the port of entry. The following information must appear on the end panel of the shipping container: product name, foreign establishment number, country of origin, and shipping marks. In addition, there must be sufficient space to apply the U.S. import inspection stamp. In addition, the container label must include the name and address of the foreign establishment or the importer (unless it appears on labels of immediate containers inside the shipping container), and, if applicable, special handling statements such as *“keep refrigerated”* or *“keep frozen.”*

U.S. Port Of Entry Procedures

Meat and poultry arriving at a U.S. port of entry are subject to laws and regulations administered by several Federal agencies.

Licensing

USDA does not require licenses for importing meat or poultry into the United States. Importers may choose to use agents, who are called customs brokers, and they must be licensed by the U.S. Customs Service.

U.S. Customs Service Requirements

Importers of any merchandise into the United States must file a Customs entry form with the appropriate port director of the U.S. Customs Service within 5 working days after the shipment arrives at a port. For meat and poultry shipments, FSIS requires two documents which should accompany the filing with the Customs Service:

- The original certificate (often referred to as a health certificate) from the country of origin indicating the product was inspected and passed by the country's inspection service and is eligible for export to the United States.
- The Import Inspection Application and Report (FSIS Form 9540-1).

The Customs Service also requires the importer to post a bond, usually in an amount to cover the value of the shipment plus duties and fees. Meat and poultry shipments remain under bond and subject to recall by the Customs Service until FSIS notifies the Service of the results of the reinspection.

If any U.S. requirements are not met, the bond may have to be forfeited, and additional penalties may be assessed.

For more information about U.S. Customs Service requirements, contact one of the Customs offices located in major U.S. cities. They are listed in the telephone directory under "*U.S. Government, Treasury Department.*"

FSIS Requirements

After the Customs Service and APHIS requirements are met, the shipment must be inspected by FSIS at an approved import inspection facility. Import Field Offices (IFO), which oversee port-of-entry reinspection, can provide the names of approved establishments and information on how to get an establishment approved as an inspection facility.

The AIIS

FSIS enters information about the shipment into a centralized computer system called the Automated Import Information System (AIIS). The AIIS scans its memory bank to determine if the country, plant, and product are eligible for export to the United States. When the shipment is ready to be reinspected by FSIS, the AIIS will generate an inspection assignment, based on the plant and country's compliance history for that specific product. Inspection results are later entered into the AIIS, helping to establish the level of reinspection for future shipments from the plant and the country.

The Reinspection Process

When a shipment is ready to be reinspected, the importer makes a request to FSIS. The assignment is generated by the AIIS and, within 72 hours, the shipment must be presented for reinspection at an approved import facility. The IFO can provide the names of approved estab-

lishments and information on how to get an establishment approved as an inspection facility.

FSIS import inspectors first check the documents to assure the shipment is properly certified by the foreign country. Inspection may be delayed or refused if the documents contain irregularities or errors. Inspectors next examine each shipment for general condition and labeling and then conduct the inspection assignments directed by the AIIS.

In some cases, the AIIS will designate the shipment as a “*skip*,” and no further inspections are required. A plant with a good compliance history will not have as many inspections assigned.

Several types of inspection (TOI) may be assigned by the AIIS including net weight checks of retail packages; examination of the container’s condition; examination for product defects; incubation of canned goods; label examination; and laboratory analyses for additives, product composition, microbiological contamination, residues, and species. In conducting these inspections, a certain amount of product is randomly selected and examined by FSIS import inspectors.

When product samples are sent to FSIS laboratories for analysis, the shipment is usually released before test results are received. However, if the plant had previous violations or a problem is suspected, the shipment is held until laboratory results are known.

Inspected and Passed Products

When a shipment passes inspection, each shipping container is stamped with the official mark of inspection and released into U.S. commerce. From this point, the shipment is treated as domestic product.

Refused Entry Products

If a shipment does not meet U.S. requirements, the containers are stamped "*U.S. Refused Entry*," and within 45 days must be exported, destroyed, or--with the approval of FDA--converted to animal food.

Reinspection of Canadian Imports

In accordance with the United States-Canada Free Trade Agreement, the two countries implemented comparable import inspection procedures that reflect the equivalency of their inspection systems. In lieu of FSIS Form 9540-1, Canadian imports must be accompanied by FSIS Form 9510-1. Prior to shipping, this form must be faxed to the border import establishment where the shipment will be taken to get an inspection assignment. The import establishment acknowledges receipt of the document by returning it to the exporting establishment, and also provides a copy to the FSIS inspector. A copy of the 9510-1 and the original export certificate from Canada must accompany the shipment to the United States. To receive an assignment, the shipment proceeds to a U.S. import inspection facility at the border or, in some cases, to a U.S. Customs border station where an FSIS import inspector is assigned. If the shipment is assigned an inspection, the inspection must take place at an approved import facility.

More information about procedures for importing meat and poultry from Canada is available from the Detroit IFO.

FSIS Import Inspection DIVISION OFFICES

More information on port-of-entry requirements and procedures is available from the FSIS Import Inspection Division. The headquarters office can be reached by calling (202) 501-7515 or by writing:

Import Inspection Division
FSIS International Programs
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC 20250

Following is a list of the FSIS Import Field Offices:

New York, NY

Area of Responsibility: Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York*, Maine*, New Hampshire*, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Vermont*
(*except Canadian border locations).

Six World Trade Center
Room 759-A
New York, NY 10048
Phone: (212) 466-4464

Philadelphia, PA

Area of Responsibility: Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia.

U.S. Customs House Bldg.
2nd and Chestnut Streets, Room 601
Philadelphia, PA 19106
Phone: (215) 597-4513



Miami, FL

Area of Responsibility: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Puerto Rico, Tennessee, Virgin Islands.

111 N.W. 183rd St.
Suite 516
Miami, FL 33169
Phone: (305) 536-4271

Long Beach, CA

Area of Responsibility: Arizona, American Samoa, Guam, Hawaii, New Mexico, North Mariana Islands, Oklahoma, Southern California, Texas.

501 W. Ocean Blvd.
Suite 5190
Long Beach, CA 90802
Phone: (310) 980-4144

Tacoma, WA

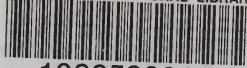
Area of Responsibility: Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Northern California, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming.

World Trade Center, Room 108
3600 Port of Tacoma Rd.
Tacoma, WA 98424
Phone: (206) 383-7915

Detroit, MI

Area of Responsibility: Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and border locations in New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine.

477 Michigan Ave., Room 1710
Detroit, MI 48226
Phone: (313) 226-6107



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Related Publications

The following publications offer more detailed information about the requirements and procedures for importing to the United States:

The Code of Federal Regulations contains U.S. regulatory requirements. •Title 9, Parts 200 to End, contains FSIS regulations relating to meat and poultry products. •Title 9, Part 94, contains information on APHIS requirements. •Title 19, Parts 141 and 142 contains general U.S. Customs Service regulations; Title 19, Part 12, contains U.S. Customs regulations for importing restricted merchandise including meat and poultry.

Importing into the United States, prepared by the U.S. Customs Service, Department of the Treasury, provides general information on Customs requirements and other laws applying to imports.

Individual titles of the Code of Federal Regulations and the Customs Service publication may be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402; telephone (202) 783-3238.

Foreign Countries and Plants Certified to Export Meat and Poultry to the United States lists plants in eligible countries that have been certified as meeting all USDA requirements. Single, free copies are available from FSIS-USDA-IP-PDD, Room 3718 Franklin Court, Suite 3700W, Washington, DC 20250-3700.

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